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Peacebuilding Commission

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Organizational Committee
First session

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 23 June 2006, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Annan ..... (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
Chairman: Mr. Gaspar Martins ..... (Angola)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Opening of the session

Statement by the Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chairman**, speaking as Secretary-General, said that there were few issues on which there was greater consensus, or higher expectations, than on the responsibility of the United Nations to help States and societies to recover from the devastation of war. It was not accidental that world leaders, at the 2005 World Summit, had stressed the vital role of the Organization in post-conflict transitions and called on the General Assembly and the Security Council to establish the Peacebuilding Commission.

2. The international community now had at its disposal a unique intergovernmental body: the first devoted specifically to peacebuilding. The new Commission would aim to provide more sustained, more coordinated and more focused support to countries emerging from conflict and would bring together all the relevant actors. Taken alongside the new Human Rights Council, the strengthened Central Emergency Response Fund, the Democracy Fund and other recent changes and reforms, the Commission marked another major step towards a United Nations that was fully equipped to meet current challenges.

3. The Commission began work as the world grappled with a paradox in its efforts to promote durable peace, stability and development. There had been a very welcome decline in the overall number of conflicts, and the United Nations had done its best, through peacekeeping and other assistance, to contribute to that trend. At the same time, however, the world had seen an unacceptable number of peace agreements disintegrate within five years after the end of a civil war, with countries lapsing back into deadly conflict.

4. Some of the weaknesses in current international responses to post-conflict situations were well known, including the shortage of funds and the lack of international coordination. Another was the tendency for international actors to leave too hurriedly. As had just been seen in the case of Timor-Leste, undue haste to disengage from a transitional situation could result in reversals and a need to redeploy, at great cost to all, particularly helpless civilian victims. All those challenges had directly informed the design and mandate of the Commission, as well as the creation of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding (Standing) Fund.

5. Increased resources and improved coordination would not, in themselves, be enough to bring about lasting peace. Peacebuilding required national ownership and must be home-grown. Outsiders, however well-intentioned, could not substitute for the knowledge and will of the people of the country concerned. The people of the country best know their own history, culture and political contexts. It was they who would live with the consequences of the decisions taken. And it was they who must feel that peacebuilding was their achievement, if it was to have any hope of lasting in the long term.

6. Experience had shown that peacebuilding involved more than just preventing renewed fighting and securing physical reconstruction. A core task was to build effective public institutions, in accordance with constitutional frameworks and the rule of law.

7. All too often, war-affected populations raised their hopes for new, more equitable governance arrangements, only to see exclusionary social, economic and political structures left untouched, perpetuated, or inadvertently strengthened. It was essential for citizens to regain their trust in State institutions. Peacebuilding could help to solidify the social compact by which States delivered on their obligations to citizens, while citizens exercised their right to participate, and took charge of their destiny.

8. It must also be remembered that peacebuilding was inherently political. At times, the international community had approached peacebuilding as a largely technical exercise, involving knowledge and resources. The international community must not only understand local power dynamics, but also recognize that it was itself a political actor entering a political environment.

9. The members of the Peacebuilding Commission were well equipped to support countries emerging from conflict, since among them were not only key stakeholders such as troop contributors and donors, but also countries which themselves had gone through the transition from war to peace. Members would be called upon to act as like-minded supporters, and as allies who would remain engaged in a country beyond the lifespan of a peacekeeping mission. That would mean managing expectations, as many elements of

peacebuilding — such as reconciliation — could take years or decades, whereas people emerging exhausted from a conflict understandably wanted results much more quickly.

10. The Commission was expected to support the development of peacebuilding strategies, and to build consensus among international actors for their implementation. It would work closely with other United Nations bodies. He was pleased to note that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, as well as regional development banks and other organizations would be part of that effort. Of course, the active participation of national authorities in the Commission's country-specific endeavours would be essential, as it would give further weight to the dialogue at country level between the respective authorities and the international community. He hoped the Commission would also find ways to reach out to local civil society, the private sector and others in a position to contribute.

11. The Peacebuilding Support Office, for its part, would support the Commission by providing information and analysis, and by ensuring that the recommendations emanating from the Commission's deliberations were translated into concrete action at the country level. The Peacebuilding Fund, meanwhile, would provide additional means, complementing other funding sources. He urged Member States to endow it generously and consistently.

12. The Commission represented a symbol of both hope and perseverance: hope for the many millions of people throughout the world who were striving to keep their societies on the fragile road to peace; and perseverance, because it had overcome considerable difficulties to get a new and vital endeavour up and running. He was sure it would show similar resolve in carrying out its mandate, and wished it every success as its important work now began.

Election of the Chairman

13. *Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola) was elected Chairman by acclamation.*

14. *Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Chairman

15. **The Chairman** said that his election was a symbolic recognition of the purposes for which the Commission had been established, as he represented a Government which was in the process of overcoming the negative consequences of many years of conflict in a continent with the largest number of countries in post-conflict situations. The establishment of the Commission afforded Member States a unique opportunity to meet the expectations of millions of people affected by cycles of conflict.

16. The often difficult negotiations over the Commission had led to laying the basis of its work through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), and to the holding of the current inaugural session in conformity with the mandate given to the Secretary-General. The efforts of the members of the Organizational Committee had resulted in the completion of some organizational aspects of its work such as the draft provisional rules of procedure and the selection of the two countries that would constitute country-specific deliberations. The timely deliberations by the Security Council regarding the countries to be included in the agenda had now made it possible for the Committee to take a decision on that matter.

17. The Committee was committed to meeting the expectations placed on it by Member States with the assistance of the Peacebuilding Support Office. No amount of effort on the part of the Committee, however, would yield any significant results unless adequate resources were made available for its proper functioning.

18. The Committee was fully committed to working closely with all Member States and relevant actors. While many parts of the United Nations had been involved in peacebuilding, the system had lacked a dedicated entity to oversee the process, ensure its coherence and support sustainable peace and development. Although the Commission was an advisory body, it was uniquely placed to fulfil that role by promoting partnership and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders, in particular within the United Nations system.

19. The full participation of the countries concerned was equally important, as they bore the ultimate responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. Such an environment required political will at all levels. The full involvement of women and young persons was pivotal for building the

necessary political will and for the success of peacebuilding efforts.

20. No single institution could address the tremendous challenge of peacebuilding on its own. He therefore commended the presence of representatives of regional and other international organizations, financial institutions and the United Nations funds and programmes as well as civil society and the private sector.

21. Financial support was essential for effective peacebuilding. Funding levels must be sustainable and predictable. He therefore made an urgent appeal to the international community to provide financial support to the Peacebuilding Fund.

22. The real test of the Commission would be its capacity to lay the foundation for successful post-conflict recovery and sustainable development, particularly in the countries to be put on the agenda. That was a challenge and a moral duty that required the commitment of all Member States.

Adoption of the draft provisional rules of procedure

23. *The draft provisional rules of procedure (to be issued in PBC/OC/1/3) were adopted, on the understanding that they would be further developed according to the requirements and methods of work of the Commission.*

Adoption of the provisional agenda (PBC/OC/1/1)

24. *The provisional agenda contained in document PBC/OC/1/1 was adopted.*

Election of other officers

25. *Ms. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) and Mr. Løvald (Norway) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

Opening statements

26. **Mr. Eliasson** (President of the General Assembly) said that the first meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission, together with the recent first meeting of the Human Rights Council, marked a historic development in the life of the United Nations. The new intergovernmental body could make a tangible difference to building sustainable peace in the years to come by ensuring for the countries concerned that post-conflict would not mean post-engagement of the international community.

27. It had grown out of an awareness of gaps in the international community's response to countries in post-conflict situations. There were not only institutional gaps but also a financing gap and a gap in coordination among the various actors. Donors had not found efficient ways of linking emergency relief to reconstruction, institution-building, reconciliation and development.

28. The Peacekeeping Commission was an important contribution to the reform agenda of the United Nations and would help it to achieve what must become one of its top priorities: to prevent States from sliding back into conflict or developing into failed States. The decision to establish it, and to put in place a Peacebuilding Support Office and a Peacebuilding Fund, was the result of arduous negotiations in which Member States had ultimately set aside their differences and taken measures that were meaningful for the people of the world. He stressed that the Commission's action would ultimately be judged in country-specific settings.

29. He noted some aspects that would be important for its future work, in particular the active involvement of the concerned government; close coordination between the peacekeeping efforts of the Security Council and peacebuilding by the Commission; the crucial role to be played by the Economic and Social Council in keeping international attention focused on the transition from recovery to development in conflict-stricken countries; the opportunity offered by the annual debate in the General Assembly to discuss peacebuilding in a broader perspective; the key contribution the international financial institutions could make to peacebuilding; dialogue with civil society; and the post-conflict recovery experience of Member States. In order for it to succeed, it must prove to be an efficient, flexible and field-oriented body, capable of translating the purposes for which it was created into action on the ground.

30. **Mr. Møller** (President of the Security Council) said that, with the launching of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission in the same week, two of the World Summit's major goals for institutional reform of the United Nations had been met. It had taken time to build the Peacekeeping Commission, which had required the unity of the

Member States; a new formula had had to be found that would reflect the cross-cutting nature of its mandate. Under the unique model chosen, the General Assembly and the Security Council had acted concurrently to establish it. The Commission's main purpose would be to provide advice to the Security Council; for that advice to have an impact, it should focus on country-specific situations and support the local coordination process at country level rather than attempting to create an additional level of coordination at Headquarters. Its recommendations should be directed to all relevant actors as well as United Nations bodies. The success of the Peacebuilding Commission's efforts would depend on the strong cooperation of the country concerned; in that connection, he welcomed the willingness of Burundi and Sierra Leone to be on its agenda.

31. The new body should build on existing peacebuilding mechanisms and develop integrated strategies among all the relevant actors in order to prevent countries from relapsing into conflict, as had occurred all too frequently in the past. With the valuable cooperation of financial institutions and other institutional donors, it should be able to achieve concrete results on the ground. That should be the measure of its success.

32. **Mr. Hachani** (President of the Economic and Social Council) said that the new body would mark a turning point in the recovery and reconstruction efforts of countries emerging from conflict and help them to lay the foundations for sustainable development. He stressed the functional linkages between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Economic and Social Council, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 60/180: the Commission's Organizational Committee included seven members of the Council, elected by the Council; its agenda was established on the basis, in particular, of the Council's requests for advice; and the Council could take action on the advice of the Commission. The Council had long understood the importance of considering together the political, economic and social aspects of international crises; that very approach developed in its ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict, had led to the establishment of the Peacekeeping Commission. With regard to Guinea-Bissau, Burundi and Haiti, in particular, it was important for the Economic and Social Council and the Commission to discuss the linkages between their actions, and for the Commission to benefit from the lessons learned by the ad hoc advisory groups.

33. As the success of the Commission would depend on results on the ground, fruitful interaction and appropriate coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council would be of paramount importance. The three main organs of the United Nations would need to work together, given the inseparability of the concepts of security and development.

34. **Mr. Adams** (Vice-President of the World Bank), speaking on behalf of the President of the World Bank, said that conflict was both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Where development failed, countries ran the risk of falling into a "conflict trap". Poor countries suffered disproportionately from civil war; in the past 15 years, 80 per cent of the world's poorest countries had suffered major wars. The legacy of conflict was one of huge direct costs and incalculable indirect costs in human lives; physical infrastructure; social, financial and human capital; and human suffering and loss. He noted, in particular, that in the 1990s, 24 of Africa's 53 States had experienced sustained civil strife. However, the 2005 Human Security Report showed a sharp decline in such conflict since 2002, and internationally recognized peace agreements had ended most of the former conflicts in Africa.

35. In the light of the interdependence between security and development, the maintenance of long-term support for countries emerging from conflict must be an essential objective of the Commission. In such countries, progress towards stability and prosperity would be a long haul and would require the sustained support of the international community. The new form of cooperation offered by the Commission could make an impact, but it would be judged by the difference it made in the countries concerned. Progress needed to be driven from within, however, as shown in the case of Liberia, whose Government was receiving World Bank support through a compact to mobilize the necessary resources in partnership with responsible leadership.

36. The Peacekeeping Commission, for its part, could offer partnership both within the international community, by improving coordination between economic and security actors, avoiding duplication and bringing stakeholders together, and between the international community and the countries concerned,

by setting high standards of accountability on both sides.

37. **Mr. Munzberg** (Special Representative of the International Monetary Fund) said that the International Monetary Fund was prepared to cooperate actively with the Commission, which was a useful forum for the comprehensive treatment of all relevant aspects of countries in a post-conflict situation; IMF was already involved in a number of post-conflict cases, including in Burundi and Sierra Leone. He welcomed the invitation extended to the Fund to attend all the meetings of the Commission and noted with satisfaction that it would serve as an advisory body. That would ensure that decisions would be informed by deliberations on the entire spectrum of aspects relevant to each specific case.

Requests submitted to the Organizational Committee (PBC/OC/1/2)

38. **The Chairman** referred to a letter received from the President of the Security Council, contained in document PBC/OC/1/2, in which the Council requested the Commission to provide advice on the situations in Burundi and Sierra Leone. He proposed that the organizational aspects relating to that request should be considered at the next meeting of the Organizational Committee.

39. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.